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SRI LANKA

SNAPSHOT

Job Fair Restores Hope for Unemployed Youth

Youth flock in record numbers to the Jobs Fair in Vavuniya.



Thousands of conflict affected youth patiently lined up at the Vavuniya Jobs Fair for the chance to meet with potential employers, interview and learn about possibilities in the job market.

Over 40% of youth who interviewed at Jobs Fair secured job offers on the day of the event. For many this boost will mean the difference between economic stability or a life of continued hardship.

Decades of war have devastated the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, leaving a legacy of poverty and high unemployment.

Youth are especially vulnerable with limited access to employment opportunities in the North.

Taking advantage of this rare window of opportunity, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and JobsNet, the national employee delivery system, organized a job training and placement program. The program registered unemployed youth in a national database, screened applicants, and held training on interview skills, résumé preparation, and career guidance.

Following the training, the town of Vavuniya, in northern Sri Lanka, hosted its first ever Jobs Fair. More than 15,000 youth came seeking jobs. A range of potential employers were present, including apparel manufacturers, private banks, insurance agencies, produce suppliers, and medium scale enterprises expanding into the newly opened Northern markets.

By the end of the day, after nearly 8,000 interviews, employers made over 3,200 job offers, with many more people shortlisted for follow up interviews. Following the Jobs Fair, other businesses asked JobsNet to match them with qualified job seekers and arrange interviews, helping even more youth find jobs.

For some youth, leaving their communities and families for employment opportunities is daunting. TIMEX Garments Pvt. Ltd. devised a creative solution, both to meet their business needs and to meet the needs of newly-recruited employees. Through one-on-one discussions, youth recruited from the North were offered short-term positions in TIMEX's factories in the South, with the intention of permanent job placement in a new factory the company intends to establish in the northern district of Mannar.

The Jobs Fair was about more than linking unemployed youth with employers; it was about restoring hope to a region devastated by conflict. Through an intensive mobilization campaign, OTI's program helped communities across the North become aware of the new opportunities available with the end of the civil war. Now, unemployed youth have a chance to develop their own vision and drive to secure job placements and help rebuild their communities.

Telling Our Story

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